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LETTER FROM T. M'CLINTOCK

TO

THE ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS

FOR PROMOTING THE

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, &c.

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At a meeting of the Association of Friends for Promoting the abolition of Slavery, and Improving the Condition of the Free people of Color, held at Green street Meeting House, Fifth mo. 3th, 1840, the following letter being read, was directed to be published.

CALEB CLOTHIER, } Clerks.
ANNE CHURCHMAN, }

To "*The Association of Friends for Advocating the Cause of the Slave, and Improving the Condition of the free People of Color.*"*

BELOVED FRIENDS,—In recurring to the opportunity when it was my privilege to mingle with you at the meeting of your Association held last year, in the week of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, and in recollecting that the period is at hand when you will be likely again to be convened on a similar occasion, my mind is clothed with affectionate desires for your encouragement in the work of benevolence and humanity in which you are engaged. And what is that work? The name by which you have designated yourselves is, "The Association of Friends for Advocating the cause of the Slave, and Improving the Condition of the free People of Color." And what is a *slave*? A being made in the image of God, bearing a conscious, intelligent, and free nature—stamped with the lineaments of immortality—possessed of the inalienable right to exercise the faculties conferred on him, in the acquirement of knowledge and virtue, in the promotion of his own happiness and the happiness of the beings around him, agreeably to the relations which the Creator has established. A

* The title of the Association has been changed, as above, since last year.

slave is such a being, with such a nature, with such rights, subjected involuntarily to the control of a fellow man. Unable to call any thing he has his own, except his unuttered thoughts. Denied the use of the faculties of mind or body, only in accordance to the will of another. Denied the privilege of using them in acquiring knowledge, in acquiring virtue, in acquiring happiness for himself or those most nearly related to him. Forbidden the exercise of the sympathies and affections of his nature. Forbidden to pour out these sympathies and affections in acts of kindness to his fellows in their afflictions, in cherishing and sustaining through life, with conjugal endearments, the partner of his choice, and in the extension of parental cares and solitudes for his children. The child denied the exercise of filial affection, in aiding, in its turn, the parent, and in soothing, by a heaven-born tenderness, his declining years. In short, a slave is one, the high aspirations of whose soul are crushed—the image of the Creator in him effaced, and his whole nature degraded and brutalized, as far as can be done, by closing the avenues to knowledge, prostrating the pillars of virtue, repressing and rupturing all the sympathies and finer feelings, and paralyzing the moral faculties by cruelty and crime.

To lift your brother man from this degradation—to remove from him the influences which sink him in ignorance, in vice, in suffering, is one, and I trust, a main object of your Association. For, to use your best efforts to do all this, is to “advocate the cause of the slave.” And when you have broken the cruel fetters which bind down his humanity, your next object is to hold out to him the lights of knowledge and the attractions of goodness, that he may walk in all the dignity of his manhood and in all the glory of his Godlike nature. Or, by doing this, you wish to “improve the condition” of the People of Color, who are already free.

Your Association embraces two great objects, two important duties. With regard to the first—to the humane, the benevolent, the Christian mind, a consideration of the

nature and effects of slavery, to which I have adverted, will be sufficient to engage the sympathies, and induce the solemn inquiry, Is there not a duty devolving on me in relation to an evil affecting so terribly a large portion of fellow beings, children of the same common Father?—And with regard to the second, an extensive field opens for the exercise of benevolence, not only in efforts to improve this class of our brethren and sisters by promoting the right and worthy application of the talents with which a benevolent God has endowed them, but in removing, as far as possible, that prevailing prejudice, the withering effects of which are so keenly felt by them.

Your minds, I doubt not, appreciate these views. Their advancement more effectually by associated action, has led to the formation of your Society. But, beloved brethren and sisters, let me incite you to renewed and increased zeal and diligence in the most interesting objects of your Association. Be not weary, I entreat you, in well doing, though little may seem to be achieved in “the cause of the slave.” Remember our brother is still in bonds, toiling, stricken, and bleeding under the hard task-master—his sympathies crushed—his Godlike nature a moral waste. Our sister is in agony in the cotton field—writhing beneath the keen lash of the oppressor—prostituted to his vile and leoniac lusts, with the alternative only of submission or death—the fine sensibilities of her nature extinguished, ruined, and their guardian and angelic influences supplied by those common to the lowest orders of animal existence! If the time of their redemption seems long to us who are looking on, or laboring for their emancipation, what must it seem to them, into whose souls the iron of slavery is daily and momentarily entering!

Oh! could we put our souls into their soul's stead—did we, indeed, “remember those in bonds as bound with them,” could we repose in our sealed houses, with the unconcern in which most of us are now reposing? Were it even our own husbands and wives, our own immediate parents and children, brothers and sisters, that were thus dehu-

manized, subjected to this merciless, barbarous system would not the feelings of our humanity speak out in effort for their rescue? Would not our exertions be untiring? Would we not invoke all that is sacred in religion, all that is tender and holy in human nature, to aid us in our efforts for their liberation, and the elevation of their moral and physical being? And are not *these* our brethren, our friends, our neighbors? Can we, as the Priest and Levites pass them by and be guiltless? Will not the King's award to us be, "inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it not to me!"

Oh, then, be not weary in well doing. Let us look not on *our* toils, but on the chained and stricken slave, never tire till the manacle falls from his limbs and the fetter from his soul, and he rises disenthralled, body and mind, from slavery and sin, the free subject of the kingdom of heaven.

As members of the Society of Friends, a high responsibility rests upon us in this matter. We have been by education, by principle, by habits of thought, by practice exempt from many of the fetters which bind the free spirit of man. We have been placed in a position in which we could exercise the divine promptings of humanity, in which we could take more just and comprehensive view of the obligations of justice, of mercy, of truth, of fidelity and that charity which suffereth long and is kind, and which "seeketh not her own." Religion, in our view has been emphatically embodied, not in speculative theories, but in practical righteousness, in active virtues in reverence to God, in benevolence to man—the latter being the only sure test of the former. Well, where much is given much is required. We are all stewards of the grace of God. For every advantage by which we are distinguished from the rest of our brethren and sisters of the human family, we are accountable. They are conferred on us not from any personal merit, or special regard of the impartial Father of man, but are the result of the operations of his inscrutable providence, and of the laws

has established for the good of the whole. They are talents given us to occupy in the renovation of the world. *The work we know*, and the time of labor now is ours. Let us work while the day lasts, for the period is at hand when our work will end.

The events of the past year admonish us to diligence, specially you, my beloved brethren and sisters, whom I am addressing. When I met you, a year past, your association numbered as one of its most valued and active members, the excellent, the beloved JOSEPH PARRISH.* He is now removed. The chill of death has checked the warm current of his sympathetic bosom. He is no longer with you to cheer you on in your work of love, by the kind tones and kindling eloquence of his voice, and the wisdom of his counsels. In his removal you have lost a most efficient coadjutor, and the slave a sympathetic, true hearted, and powerful friend. Assembled with us, also, on the occasion to which I have adverted, among the comparatively few elderly Friends who were found there, was the amiable, the excellent, the meek-spirited JOHN FOULKE. He had long commiserated his brother in bonds, and his commiseration had not been entombed in his own breast—his mouth had been opened “for the dumb,” in the cause of those “appointed to destruction.” His presence on that occasion was cheering to my own spirit;—for I love to see old age verdant with the foliage of human sympathies and affections. But he, too, has been called away from his labor in his vineyard. On us who remain, the work now devolves—the responsibility is ours. May it be our concern to be found faithful—assured that he who has invested us with consciousness of our duties, will qualify us for their fulfillment, and bless our efforts, not only to the objects of concern, but to our own advancement in the perfections of

* Dr. Parrish was the author of the Constitution of the Association, and felt a deep interest in its concerns, but had not his name affixed as a member.

our being, in durable riches and righteousness. For beautiful reciprocity marks all the economy of his wisdom by which "he that watereth is himself also watered"—he that benefits his brother, has the blessing poured back into his own bosom.

Affectionately, your friend and brother in the hope and labor of the world's redemption,

THO. M'CLINTOCK.

Waterloo, N. Y., Fifth mo. 9, 1840.

